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EDITORIAL

THE meeting of the Committee on Rock Nomenclature, appointed by the International Geological Congress, which was held in Paris last October, failed to elicit concerted action on the part of petrographers. Only two reports were received from committees representing different countries. They were from Russia and France, and will be transmitted to the Congress. The small attendance at the meeting, the wide divergence of views indicated by members expressing themselves by letter, and the desire of independence manifested by all, make it impossible for the committee as a whole to transmit a report to the congress. Each petrographer is expected to present his views in his own way at the coming meeting in Paris.

Apparently there has been no progress toward harmony of nomenclature or of rock classification. There is still a wide divergence of ideas concerning rocks themselves and the methods of dealing with them. While this is to be regretted, it is not to be wondered at, considering the abstract petrological, as well as the anthropic, elements involved in the problem. However, there are indications of advancement along more or less converging lines that will eventually unite. In the meantime every petrographer is a law unto himself, as is evident from articles recently published in this JOURNAL and elsewhere.

PROFESSOR HOBBS, in his discussion of this subject in this volume of the JOURNAL, has laid special emphasis on the value of diagrams in conveying ideas of relative quantities of chemical constituents of rocks, availing himself of Brögger's modification of Michel-Lévy's diagrams. The importance of such devices for expressing relative quantities and for permitting ready comparison of many variable factors in an intricate problem cannot be overestimated. They not only fix in an easily comprehended form facts already vaguely apprehended, but often suggest relationships not previously suspected. With all machines the product turned out depends on the material operated on. And while the machine itself may be perfect, the product may be open to criticism.

The diagrams in question tend to give more definite impressions of the relative quantities of the chemical elements in rocks than are obtained from the usual statements of analyses. But, if instead of actual rock compositions there is substituted an average of various rocks, it is clear that there is danger of placing too much value on the apparently definite expression conveyed by the composite diagram. Everything depends upon what rocks have been grouped together. Defects in grouping vitiate the diagram. For this reason it is desirable to distinguish between the use of graphical methods of presenting an assemblage of diverse quantities, which is highly commendable, and the practice of averaging diverse quantities, which is open to serious criticism.

J. P. I.